

Message Text

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ACTION PM-05

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C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 2120

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS ZA BC
SUBJ: POSSIBLE ARMS ASSISTANCE TO ZAMBIA AND BOTSWANA

REF: (A) 77 GABORONE 3056 AND PREVIOUS , (B) 77 STATE 254881,
(C) MEMCON OF DEC 16, 1977: SUBJECT SECURITY AND ECONOMIC
ASSISTANCE FOR BOTSWANA

1. WE UNDERSTAND THAT DEPARTMENT IS CONSIDERING REVIEWING
ITS ARMS TRANSFER POLICY WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF ESTABLISHING
A SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP WITH ZAMBIA.
2. DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL PERSISTENT GOB EFFORTS LAST YEAR
TO OBTAIN SECURITY ASSISTANCE IN FORM OF EITHER GRANT OR
FMS CREDIT. THEY BASED THEIR PLEAS ON GOB TRUST OF U.S.
AND "COMMON ATTACHMENT" TO DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES. OUR REPLY
WAS THAT GRANT AID WAS AN IMPOSSIBILITY AND THAT THE FMS
ROUTE WOULD REQUIRE A PRESIDENTIAL DETERMINATION (PD) (MOST
UNLIKELY IN VIEW OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S EXTREME RELUCTANCE
TO ESTABLISH NEW SUPPLY RELATIONSHIPS). OUR CONCLUSION WAS
THAT THE ONLY FEASIBLE ALTERNATIVE WOULD BE FOR THE GOB TO
PURCHASE ARMS COMMERCIALY FROM U.S. SUPPLIERS, FINANCING THE
COST ITSELF.

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3. NOTWITHSTANDING THESE DISCOURAGING REPLIES, AT YEARS END,
PRESIDENT KHAMA WAS WITH DIFFICULTY DISSUADED FROM SENDING A
PERSONAL LETTER TO PRESIDENT CARTER POINTING OUOUT THAT
"WE FEEL IT IMPORTANT AND URGENT THAT BOTSWANA ... SHOULD
DEVELOPE THE NECESSARY CAPABILITY TO ENABLE HER TO DISCOURAGE
EITHER THE RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES OR THE NATIONALIST
GUERRILLAS FROM CROSSING INTO OUR TERRITORY", AND REQUESTING

A PRESIDENTIAL DETERMINATION "TO ALLOW BOTSWANA TO SECURE MILITARY EQUIPMENT FROM THE UNITED STATES UNDER THE FACILITY OF THE FOREIGN MILITARY SALES CREDIT ARRANGEMENT". (REF C). IN ACCOMPANYING DISCUSSION GOB OFFICIALS STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF "PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT" INHERENT IN A P.D.

4. WE, THEREFORE, HAVE EVERY REASON TO BELIEVE THAT GOB REMAINS DEEPLY INTERESTED IN ACQUIRING ARMS FROM U.S. FOR POLITICAL AS WELL AS MILITARY REASONS. THIS QUESTION IS STILL ON THE GOB AGENDA AS UNFINISHED BUSINESS.

5. GIVEN THE DISAPPOINTMENT AND FRUSTRATION ATTENDING PRESIDENT KHAMA'S REQUEST TO SEE PRESIDENT CARTER DURING HIS JUNE VISIT (WHILE PRESIDENT KAUNDA WAS RECEIVED AT THE WHITE HOUSE LESS THAN TWO WEEKS EARLIER), WE BELIEVE USG DECISION TO SUPPLY ARMS TO ZAMBIA ALONE WOULD BE VIEWED BY GOB AS FURTHER EXAMPLE OF MISUNDERSTANDING OF OR DISREGARD FOR GOB'S DIFFICULT AND DELICATE SECURITY SITUATION AND FAILURE TO APPRECIATE ITS NEEDS. THE RESULT COULD DAMAGE RELATIONS WITH GOB WHOSE SUPPORT WE COUNT ON IN ALL IMPORTANT POLICY AREAS. FOR US TO MAKE A 180 DEGREE DEVIATION FROM OUR AVOWED ARMS POLICY FOR ZAMBIA ONLY, COULD BE SEEN AS DECEPTION AND/OR DUPLICITY; AT BEST IT WOULD CALL INTO QUESTION THE CREDIBILITY OF OUR STATED POSITIONS ON ARMS TRANSFERS.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: IF USG IS DETERMINED TO PROVIDE ARMS TO
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ZAMBIA, THAT WE ALSO REQUEST A PD TO DO THE SAME FOR BOTSWANA BY MEANS OF FMS CREDITS. WE MAKE THIS RECOMENDATION BASED ON FOLLOWING PRINCIPLE CONSIDERATIONS: THE OBJECTIVE MILITARY THREAT AGAINST BOTSWANA HAS BEEN STEADILY BUILDING; THE RHODESIAN REGIME BECOMES INCREASINGLY DESPERATE, THE SHOOTING WAR BETWEEN PF AND SALISBURY IS HEATING UP, THE GOB FINDS IT EVER MORE DIFFICULT POLITICALLY AND MILITARILY TO HOLD FAST TO ITS POLICY OF DENYING BOTSWANA TERRITORY FOR USE BY GUERRILLAS, BOTH SIDES ARE INCREASINGLY LOSING EFFECTIVE CONTROL OF THEIR FOLLOWERS (ESPECIALLY EXTREME ADHERENTS), AND THE FLOW OF REFUGEES INTO BOTSWANA OFFERS AN EVER-MORE TEMPTING TARGET FOR POSSIBLE RHODESIAN RETALIATORY ACTION. FINALLY, THE APPROVAL OF PRESIDENTIAL DETERMINATION FOR BOTSWANA WOULD BE VIEWED HERE AS THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT FROM THE WEST THE GOB SO BADLY NEEDS AND WANTS.
NORLAND

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